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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: ENVIRONMENT, IRAN, PAKISTAN, U.S.-RUSSIA,
NATO-RUSSIA;BERLIN

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
- ¶2. (Environment) COP 15
- ¶3. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict, Protests
- ¶4. (Pakistan) Court Ruling on President's Amnesty
- ¶5. (U.S.-Russia) START Talks
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- ¶1. Lead Story Summary

Print and electronic media opened with reports on the decisive talks
of the Copenhagen climate summit. Editorials focused on the same
issue and on the ruling of the European Human Rights Court on
preventive detention in Germany.

- ¶2. (Environment) COP 15

Die Welt (12/18) noted in a front-page editorial: "Was Copenhagen
the
last chance for the world? Given the fact that the climate
conference
in Copenhagen will come to an end without a visible result, the
apocalypse is written on the wall. And America will be once again
blamed for the end of the world. Barack Obama, who many Europeans
believed to be able to walk on water, already faced doubts over his
policy on Afghanistan. Obama will be blamed in particular because
he
was unable to resolve the fundamental conflict between rich and
poor,
between established industrialized nations and emerging superpowers.

Even those who do not believe in the authority of politicians to
prohibit global warming note that Americans have some catching-up to
do.... The thermal insulation of American homes must be improved,
cars

must consume less gasoline and industrial plants must become more energy efficient.... For Obama, who came into office with a serious ecological program, jobs and health care reform have a priority. He would be badly advised to anticipate the Congress' decision-making or to disempower legislators by emergency acts. Europeans should stop to act as schoolmasters. Under Jimmy Carter, Americans invented photovoltaic and wind turbines. Germans and Japanese are now earning money with it - as businessmen, not as environmental angels. Pragmatists achieve more than ideologists. Let's be optimistic. Copenhagen may have been the last chance for the world. However, the next conference and the next chance will come."

Deutschlandfunk radio (12/18) noted: "Clinton did what Merkel did not do. The U.S. Secretary stole the show from Merkel. The U.S. wants to participate in the 100 billion dollar package for the poorest countries in the world. The U.S. offer is a new impetus for the deadlocked negotiations... Is success therefore still possible in Copenhagen? ... Yes, because all pieces are on the table... And only the political will must be bundled up. This will be Merkel's moment. She knows the subject better than any of her colleagues, can play the

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political poker game and enjoys a great reputation.... Merkel must use this historic moment and put the pieces of the puzzle together with Obama and Hu Jintao."

Sddeutsche (12/18) editorialized: "The double game the Chinese are playing is threatening the success of the global climate summit in Copenhagen. In international bodies like the G20 the Chinese insist on making decisions on an eye level with industrial countries. This is legitimate as it represents one eighth of the global economic power. Every eighth dollar that is spent for consumption in the world goes to China. Due to this huge economic program, China's economy is growing so much that it keeps the decline of the western industry in balance. China also has the greatest foreign currency reserves worldwide. However, in international climate protection, the Chinese like to sit in the second row. Meanwhile, there is no other country that emits as much damaging greenhouse gases into the air like the People's Republic of China. But the government in Beijing is persistently rejecting binding regulations to reduce emissions. The

argument that China is a developing country is particularly annoying.... Concerning climate protection, the Chinese vigorously reject the power they demand in other decision-making processes. They change their status as they like.... If China allows the negotiations in Copenhagen to fail, it will bring its economic position into discredit."

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/18) editorialized: "The goal of limiting the increase of temperature to two degrees Celsius and to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions is threatened to disappear behind angry controversy. This has to do with interests and not so much

the
problem of the unprofessional leadership of the negotiations.... A
failure of the global climate protection agreement will not be the
end
of international climate policy or the end of the planet. However,
the attempt to resolve a problem internationally would have failed.

The advocates of national interests and climate extremists who
warned
against an apocalypse must then be blamed, not just the Danish host.

Hopefully, reason and a sense of responsibility will prevail in
Copenhagen after all."

ARD-TV's late-night newscast Tagesthemen (12/17) opined: "The
premonition of a failure hurts... Due to the many figures mentioned
in
the debate, we easily forget that this is not just about melting
glaciers, but the future stability of the world.

Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio (12/17) remarked: "This climate summit
is

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a huge mess. Everybody is talking at once.... Our ecological angel
Merkel does not deserve any sympathy because - surprise, surprise -
she is not a climate chancellor. Forget about her wearing red
anoraks
in front of glaciers to win the hearts of voters. It is shameful
that
she puts German interests over climate protection."

13. (Iran) Nuclear Conflict, Protests

The events in Iran do not play a great role in today's press. Only
two papers carry factual news reports on the protests in Iran and on
the country's nuclear program. In a report under the headline:
"Iran
Testing Obama's Patience," die tageszeitung (12/18) wrote: "The new
test of a medium-range missile in Iran has escalated the controversy

over Iran's nuclear program. The United States but also a few EU
states are accusing Iran of having intensified the distrust towards

Iran's nuclear program with the missile test. According to the
United
States, the missile test raises new questions about the peaceful
intentions of Tehran and the nature of its nuclear program. While
the
West is preparing tough sanctions on Iran, Tehran does not seem to
have made up its mind on an official position. The rivalries and
controversies within the state leadership have made the Islamic
Republic incapable of accepting a clear position."

Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/18) dealt with the opposition movement in
Iran and reported under the headline: "Fight for the Dead
Revolutionary Leader" and said: "Tensions between the Iranian regime

and the opposition are heading for a new culmination. Following the
official joint prayer at Tehran's university, a large-scale rally is
to take place later in which all supporters of revolutionary leader
Ayatollah Khomeini are supposed to demonstrate their loyalty to the
founder of the state. The reason for the rally was the burning of an
effigy of Khomeini which was shown on TV. But if supporters and

opponents of Khomeini are demonstrating at the same time, the slightest reason would be enough to provoke a new eruption of violence. In addition, the popular passion plays during the Muharrem month offer opponents of the regime numerous opportunities to protest the regime and to make their voices heard. The concern about the political and social stability of the country is rising on all sides...."

14. (Pakistan) Court Ruling on President's Amnesty

The papers did not have any commentary on the events in Pakistan but several newspapers carried reports on the suspension of the amnesty law. Sueddeutsche (12/18) headlined: "Pakistan's President Loses Protection," and reported that President Zardari "is now coming

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under increasing pressure at home, following the Supreme Court's decision, die tageszeitung (12/18) reported under the headline: "Pressure on Pakistan's President Zardari is Mounting." The daily wrote: "Pakistan's most important opposition party has called upon President Zardari to step down after the country's Supreme Court declared an amnesty law null and void which protected Zardari, the defense and interior ministers, as well as 8,000 other people. Zardari, who faced several trials before the adoption of the amnesty law, could now face trials again. And then his election could be held to be unconstitutional. Since Zardari has taken office, Pakistan has descended even more into a state of terror. Zardari is also increasingly unpopular because he is considered too yielding towards the United States. Pakistan's media have overwhelmingly welcomed the annulment of the amnesty law."

"Pakistan's Highest Court Annulled Amnesty Law," headlined Tagesspiegel (12/18), and wrote: "In a historic move, Pakistan's Supreme Court reversed an amnesty for politicians and declared it 'unconstitutional.' Thus far, the amnesty protected America's ally

Zardari from an aggressive opposition, which called for Zardari's resignation immediately after the pronouncement of the verdict. Pakistan's newspapers commented positively on the verdict, saying it

was a victory of justice. The daily The News, which is critical of the government, even headlined: 'Zardari: An Accused President.' It is true that Zardari as state leader enjoys immunity, but his power apparatus is tottering and the legitimacy of his presidency is now being questioned. After a lengthy period of political calm, Pakistan is again faced with months of tension.'

15. (U.S.-Russia) START Talks

Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/18) headlined; "Priority for START," and wrote: "America and Russia are preparing for the overdue continuation of nuclear disarmament negotiations by limiting their strategic weapons to between 1,500 and 1,650 warheads. The basic principles for a new treaty are laid down anyway since the understanding between President Obama and Russian President Medvedev last year. Without a substantial agreement, both powers would have an unlimited time to compose their strategic forces and arm them at their own discretion.

But this is not the declared intention and is not in the long-term economic interests of both governments, which want to find savings while maintaining operational large-scale conventional forces."

In an editorial, Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/18) opined: "For months, the United States and Russia have been negotiating under strict secrecy a new nuclear disarmament agreement. If Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov is now publicly complaining about the U.S. conduct of negotiations, saying that the treaty cannot be signed this year,

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then this is clearly the attempt to exert pressure on the Americans to make a few more concessions, because President Obama would lose face if he were unable to push through one of his main projects of his first year in office in the time frame he set for achieving this goal. The controversy focuses on apparently second-rate details...but because of Lavrov's move, these details are turning into politically basic questions. This is all the more true because Obama must get this treaty through Congress."

16. (NATO-Russia) Rasmussen in Moscow

Several papers carried reports on NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen's trip to Moscow. Sueddeutsche Zeitung (12/18) headlined: "Negative Reply to Moscow - NATO Head Rasmussen Rejects new Security Pact." Die Welt (12/18) headlined: "Russia Should Help NATO in Afghanistan - Moscow is Making a Fuss," while Tagesspiegel (12/18) reported under the headline: "NATO Wants Moscow's Assistance in Kabul."

According to an editorial in Die Welt (12/18), "The logic is clear. NATO is fighting a source of terrorism by attacking the Taliban in Afghanistan. They are threatening the West and the East, especially neighboring countries, including Russia. That is why it would, and many Russian experts see it that way, be in Moscow's own interest to grant the western alliance any kind of support. But Russia is hesitating, and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen had to leave Moscow without any concrete promises for support. There is a method behind Moscow's hesitance. First, there is the painful experience with the military defeat in Afghanistan ten years ago. And the ones who are asking for support today were also the sharpest critics of Moscow at that time. But Russian politicians have an even more ardent aversion against a more intense engagement in Afghanistan because it is a NATO action. Russia feels encircled by the Alliance. In this situation, cooperation is becoming more difficult even though it would be reasonable in Russia's interest. But when NATO is involved, Russia's politicians are standing in their own way."

MURPHY